

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 00398 01 OF 03 221605Z  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0255

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 AMMAN 0398

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E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, JO, EG, XF  
SUBJECT: TALK WITH ABDUL MUN'EM RIFAI,

SUMMARY: I REVIEWED AREAD TRNEDS WITH EX-PRIME MINISTER ABDUL MUN'EM RIFIA, WHO RECENTLY RETURNED FROM PRIVATE VISIT TO EGYPT AND WHO TALKED LAST WEEK IN AMMAN WITH VISITING SENIOR PLO OFFICIALS. IN EGYPT, HE FOUND UNWILLINGNESS BY SENIOR OFFICIALS TO FACE UP TO ECONOMIC REALITIES THAT THREATENED THEIR OWN WEALTH AND PROSPERITY, AND RLATED THIS OBSERVATION TO SBUSEQUENT DISTURBANCES IN CAIRO AND ALEXANDRIA. TURNING TO MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS, RIFAI SAID EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER FAHMI TOLD HIM PLO UNLIKELY TO BE ABLE TO ATTEND GENEVA INITIALLY AND THAT KING HUSSEIN SHOULD OPEN DIALOGUE WITH PLO. FAHMI REPEATED NOTION OF WORKING GROUPS AT GENEVA AND THOUGHT RESUMED PEACE CONFERENCE COULD COMPLETE WORK IN SIX MONTHS. IF NOT, ARABS WOULD GO TO SECURITY COUNCIL WHERE, FAHMI THOUGHT, "EXPOSURE" TACTICS WOULD EXERT PRESSURES IN ARABS' FAVOR. RIFAI CONCLUDES EGYPTIAN LEADERS, OR AT LEAST FAHMI, HAVE NOT THOUGHT THROUGH THEIR GENEVA STRATEGY WITH ANY GREAT CARE.

FROM HIS PLO CONTACTS IN CAIRO AND AMMAN RIFAI BELIEVES PLO WANTS DIALOGUE WITH JORDAN, WILL ACCEPT WEST BANK MINI-STATE, PROBABLY ACCEPTS PROSPECT THAT

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SECRET

PAGE 02 AMMAN 00398 01 OF 03 221605Z

IT WILL NOT BE INVITED INITIALLY TO GENEVA, AND IN FNAL ANALYSIS WOULD GO TO GENEVA AS PART OF JORDANIAN DELEGATION. THUS, IN FIRIA'S VIEW, TIME IS RIPE FOR JORDAN TO VGET MORE INVOLVED IN PEACE PROCESS BY GOING TO A RENEWED GENEVA CONFERENCE AND BEGINNING DIALOGUE WITH PLO. RIFAI ACKNOWLEDGED SOME OF KING HUSSEIN'S CURRENT KEY FOREIGN POLICY ADVISERS OPPOSE

THESE MOVES WHICH, THEY ARGUE, WOULD OVERLY RAISE JORDAN'S PROFILE IN PEACE PROCESS AND WOULD THREATEN TO LEAVE JORDAN WITH BLAME FOR COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT OF WEST BANK ISSUE. RIFAI VIEW, THOUGH, IS THAT JORDAN'S IMPORTANCE IN REGION IS BASED ON ITS IMPORTANT ROLE IN PEACE MAKING, IT IS DANGEROUS TO HASHEMITE KINGDOM'S FUTURE TO DEFAULT ON THAT ROLE, AND JORDAN SHOULD LOOK AFTER ITS RESPONSIBILITIES FOR WEST BANK AT GENEVA IF IT DOES NOT WANT TO BE DOMINATED POLITICALLY BY WEST BANK LATER. RIFAI BELIEVES KING HUSSEIN'S DECISION TO MEET IN AMMAN RECENTLY WITH PLO LEADERS FAHUM AND HANI AL HASSAN INDICATE HE IS COMING AROUND TO RIFAI VIEW. AT SAME TIME, RIFAI LAMENTED SLOW DOWN IN GOJ-SYRIA TIES WHICH ARE STUCK, HE IMPLIED, ON PROBLEM OF UNITING ACTIVITIES OF DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTRIES AND BY DELIVERATE SLOW DOWN ON PART OF KING'S CURRENT ADVISORS.

WHILE THERE IS SOME VALIDITY TO RIFAI'S DESCRIPTION OF KING HUSSEIN'S CURRENT FOREIGN POLICY ADVISERS. AS CAUTIOUS AND CONSERVATIVE ON JORDAN'S RELATIONS WITH SYRIA AND PLO, I BELIEVE KING AGREES THAT HIS FUTURE REQUIRES CONTRIBUTING HIS MODERATING INFLUENCE IN PEACE PROCESS, AND THAT HE STILL HAS HIGH RESPECT FOR ZAID RIFAI'S JUDGMENTS IN FOREIGN POLICY. HE WILL LOOK TO NEW US ADMINISTRATION FOR DIRECTION AND SUPPORT IN RAPIDLY DEVELOPING CURRENTS IN MIDDLE EAST. WE WILL WANT TO TRY TO ENSURE THAT JORDAN AND ARABS IN GENERAL DO NOT BECOME TOO FIXED PREMATURELY TO POSITIONS IN PEACE PROCESS SITUATION THAT, AS IT DEVELOPS FURTHER,

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PAGE 03 AMMAN 00398 01 OF 03 221605Z

WILL MOST CERTAINLY CALL FOR FLEXIBILITY ON ALL SIDES.  
END SUMMARY

1. ON JANUARY 20 I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS HIS RECENT VISIT TO EGYPT AND SOME LOCAL AND AREA ISSUES WITH FORMER PRIME MINISTER ABDUL MUN'EM RIFAI. RIFAI WAS IN EGYPT FROM JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS UNTIL MID-JANUARY VISITING HIS SON WHO IS IN CAIRO IN THE JORDANIAN EMBASSY. WHILE THERE HE SAW FAHMI, HUSNI MURBAREK, SAID MAR'I, SAUDI PRINCE BADR, AND LOCAL (CAIRO) PLO REPS AMONG OTHERS. SUBSEQUENTLY, IN AMMAN, RIFAI HELD TALKS WITH KHALID AL FAHUM, PNC LEADER AND PLO "POLITICAL ADVISOR" HANI AL HASSAN WHO RIFAI TOLD ME IS HERE AS PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE OF ABU AMMAR (ARAFAT). AMMAN TALKS HELD BEFORE PLO REPRESENTATIVES, HERE FOR ARAB PARLIAMENTARY CONGRESS, MET WITH KING HUSSEIN.

2. MY DISCUSSION WITH RIFAI TOOK PLACE IN MIDST

OF INTERNAL DISTURBANCES IN EGYPT. RIFAI SPENT A LONG TIME DESCRIBING FOR ME ALL EVIDENCE HE HAD SEEN WHILE IN EGYPT OF DISCONTENT, HIGH PRICES, AND POOR MANAGEMENT OF THE ECONOMY, ALL OF WHICH I AM SURE ARE FAMILIAR TO RECIPIENTS OF THIS MESSAGE. HE DID SAY WHEN HE HAD DISCUSSED THESE PROBLEMS WITH SENIOR EGYPTIANS (HE DID NOT MEET WITH SADAT ON THIS TRIP) HE FOUND AN UNWILLINGNESS TO FACE UP TO WHAT HE TERMED WERE THE ECONOMIC REALITIES WHICH HE JUDGED WAS BASED ON SUCH OFFICIALS'S DESIRE TO PROTECT THEIR OWN POSITIONS OF WEALTH AND PROSPERITY.

3. HE DESCRIBED FOR ME HIS MEETINGS WITH FAHMI. LATTER LEFT HIM WITH CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT PLO ATTENDANCE INITIALLY AT GENEVA WAS PROBABLY NOT POSSIBLE. AS A RESULT HE ENCOURAGED RIFAI TO SPEAK TO THE KING ABOUT OPENING A DIALOGUE WITH THE PLO.  
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PAGE 04 AMMAN 00398 01 OF 03 221605Z

(RIFAI TELLS ME HE WILL SEE THE KING JANUARY 22 FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE HIS RESIGNATION AS SENATOR PROMPTED BY PIQUE OVER THE COMPOSITION AND ACTIONS (INCLUDING AGAINST RIFAI'S RELATIVES -- OF THE BADRAN GOVERNMENT. RIFAI SAYS KING ASKED TO SEE HIM WHEN KING WAS TOLD OF RIFAI'S REMARK THAT IF JORDAN DID

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 00398 02 OF 03 221649Z  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0256

SECRET SECTION 2 OF 3 AMMAN 0398

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NOT LOOK AFTER ITS RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE WEST

BANK AND GO TO GENEVA, IT COULD WELL BE THAT THE WEST BANK MIGHT END UP LOOKING AFTER THE FATE OF THE EAST BANK AND THE HASHEMITE REGIME). RIFAI AGREES NEEDLESS TO SAY WITH BASIC THRUST OF FAHMI'S POINT WHICH FAHMI APPARENTLY TOLD HIM WAS WHAT THE US WANTS.

4. RIFAI PROBED FAHMI ON WHAT WOULD HAPPEN ONCE GENEVA GOT GOING. FAHMI SAID WORKING GROUPS COULD BE FORMED. RIFAI SAID HE ASKED HOW QUICKLY FAHMI THOUGHT GENEVA COULD COMPLETE ITS WORK. RIFAI SAID FAHMI REPLIED (HE SAID IT WAS CLEAR TO HIM FROM THE ANSWER THAT FAHMI HAD NOT THOUGHT ABOUT THE ANSWER) THAT THE WORK WOULD BE WOUND UP IN SIX MONTHS. THE NEXT QUESTION WAS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF GENEVA DID NOT SUCCEED IN SIX MONTHS? FAHMI THEN REPLIED THAT THE ARABS WOULD TAKE THE QUESTION TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL. WHEN RIFAI RECALLED THE PRESENCE OF THE GREAT POWER VETO, FAHMI SAID THAT THE ARABS "WOULD NEGOTIATE" IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL. WHEN RIFAI ASKED WHY FAHMI THOUGHT THAT PUBLIC NEGOTIATIONS IN A FORUM LIKE THE UNSC MIGHT SUCCEED IF NEGOTIATIONS WERE TO FAIL IN SEMI-PRIVATE IN GENEVA, FAHMI TALKED ABOUT "EXPOSURE" AND RIFAI SAID HE THEN CHANGED THE SECRET

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PAGE 02 AMMAN 00398 02 OF 03 221649Z

SUBJECT. RIFAI'S POINT WAS THAT THE ARABS HAVE HELPED TO DEVELOP A STRONG FRONT AND STRATEGY LEADING UP TO GENEVA, BUT THEY HAVE GHOUGHT LITTLE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS THEN. RIFAI HAD TOLD ME IN THE PAST THAT HE FAVORS SETTING A REALISTIC DATE (CERTAINLY NOT SIX MONTHS) AFTER WHICH THE ARABS WOULD HAVE TO CONCLUDE THAT THE NEGOTIATING TRACK WAS NOT WORKING AND BEGIN THINKING ABOUT WAR.

5. IN HIS MEETINGS WITH THE PLO IN CAIRO RIFAI SAID THAT SEVERAL POINTS EMERGED. (HE DID NOT NAME HIS CONTACT.) THE PLO WANTS A DIALOGUE WITH JORDAN, THE ORGANIZATION IS READY FOR A MINI-STATE IN THE WEST BANK, IT RECOGNIZES THE POSSIBILITY IT MAY NOT BE INVITED TO GENEVA INITIALLY AND IS PREPARED FOR THAT EVENTUALITY.

6. SUBSEQUENTLY, RIFAI DISCUSSED AT SOME LENGTH KING HUSSEIN'S CURRENT DILEMMA. HE SAID THAT HIS NEPHEW ZAID RIFAI HAS COME BACK FROM HIS MEETINGS WITH KEY MEMBERS OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION IN WASHINGTON CONVINCED THAT THE PLO WILL NOT BE INVITED, AND INDEED CANNOT BE INVITED, TO PARTICIPATE AT GENEVA AT THE OPENING. THUS JORDAN MUST BE PRE-

PARRED TO ASSUME A ROLE. THE KING HAS TENDED TO WANT TO FORCE THE PLO (AND THE ARAB WORLD IN TURN) TO FACE UP TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF A NEGOTIATION WITH ISRAEL, INCLUDING THE NECESSITY FOR MAKING CONCESSIONS. THIS VIEW OF OPTING OUT OF GENEVA AND NEGOTIATION ON THE WEST BANK HAS BEEN, ACCORDING TO RIFAI, HEAVILY PUSHED BY KING'S CURRENT CLOSE ADVISERS ABDUL HAMID SHARAF AND PRIME MINISTER BADRAN, BOTH WITH REPUTATIONS OF BEING EAST BANK STALARTS. (BOTH ARE CONSIDERED BY RIFAI FAMILY INCIDENTALLY AS ARCH ENEMIES IN THE CURRENT POLARIZATION BETWEEN THE RIFAIS AND SOME OF THE EAST BANK LEADERS. THE FEELING IS MUTUAL  
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PAGE 03 AMMAN 00398 02 OF 03 221649Z

ON THE OTHER SIDE). HOWEVER, RIFAI NOTED THAT HIS NEPHEW HAD SOUGHT TO CONVINCE THE KING THAT IT WAS MOST IMPORTANT FOR JORDAN TO REMAIN INVOLVED IN THE PEACE PROCESS -- ITS WHOLE FUTURE IN THE MIDDLE EAST HE SAID WAS BASED ON ITS POTENTIAL ROLE IN PEACE MAKING IN THE AREA. TO DO THIS, AND TO BEGIN A PROCESS OF ENHANCING ITS OWN ROLE, JORDAN HAD, IN THE "RIFAI VIEW", TO BEGIN A DIALOGUE WITH THE PLO. THE FACT THAT THE KING HAS MET WITH FAHUM AND HANI HASSAN, THE ELDER RIFAI TOLD ME WAS AN INDICATION THAT THE KING SAW THE WISDOM OF THIS ADVICE. RIFAI ALSO TOLD ME THAT HE HAD RECEIVED WORK BACK FROM THE PALESTINIANS THAT INDEED THE KING HAS AGREED TO A DIALOGUE AND THAT HANI HASSAN, REPRESENTING ARAFAT, IS STAYING IN AMMAN FOR A FEW DAYS TO MEET FURTHER WITH HUSSEIN.

6. RIFAI REPORTED ON HIS MEETING WITH FAHUM AND HASSAN BEFORE THEY SAW HUSSEIN. THEY HAD SEVERAL POINT TO MAKE TO RIFAI. THEY WANT A DIALOGUE WITH JORAN. THEY SPEAK ABOUT A FUTURE UNION. THEY APPEAR TO RECOGNIZE THAT IT WILL NOT BE EASY TO PUSH THEIR CAUSE FROM A PRESENT POSITIN OF WEAKNESS AFTER LEBANON. THEY FEEL THE PRESSURE ON THEM OF THE APPARENTLY UNITED VIEWS OF EGYPT AND SYRIA. RIFAI SAID THAT HE TOLDFAHUM AND HASSAN THAT THEY SHOULD BE PREPARED TO THINK ABOT A WIDE RANGE OF PROBLEMS. HE TOL THEM THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE THAT TH PLO WOULD BE INVITED TO GENEVA AT THE OUTSET AND ASKED THEM TO THINK ABOUT " WHETHER THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO JOIN A JORDANIAN DELEGATION?" HE EMPHASIZED TO THEM HE DID NOT WANT THEIR ANSWER. WHEN I ASKED HIM WHAT HE THOUGHT THEIR ANSWER WOULD BE, HE THOUGHT FOR A MOMENT AND THEN SAID IN EFFECT THAT IF IT CAME TO A CRUNCH, THE PLO WOULD AGREE TO GO TO BENEVA IN A JORDANIAN DELEGATION.

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PAGE 04 AMMAN 00398 02 OF 03 221649Z

7. IN DICUSSING FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS, RIFAI STRESSED THAT HE WILL TELL THE KING THAT HE NEEDS TO CONDUCT A DIALOGUE WITH THE PALESTINIANS, HE MUST REMAN ENGAGED IN THE PEACE PROCESS AND THAT HE MUST CLOSE WITH SYRIA IN SOME IMPORTANT FASHIION AND KEEP SYRIA INFORMED ABOUT THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS TALKS WITH THE PLO. (HE ADDED THAT HE HAD ECNOURAGED THE PLO TO DO THE SAME IN DAMASCUS AND WAS SURE THEY WOULD DO SO).

8. RIFAI THEN LAMENTED THE APPARENT SLOW DOWN IN PROGRESS ON IMPROVING THE JORDANIAN RELATINSHIP WITH SYRIA AND SAID THAT THE SYRIANS WERE DISTURBED THAT THEPROCESS SEEMED TO BE STUCK BY THE JORDANIANS ON SOME KEY POINTS IN

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 00398 03 OF 03 221658Z  
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S E C R E T SECTION 3 OF 3 AMMAN 0398

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UNITING THE ACTIVITIES OF WHAT I TOOK TO BE THE DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTERIES OF THE TWO COUNTRIES. AT THIS POINT I TOLD RIFAI THAT HE KNEW MY VIEWS ON UNITING WITH SYRIA WELL AND THAT WHILE I COULD NOT YET SPEAK FOR THE NEW ADMINISTRATION JORDAN SHOULD CONSIDER THAT THE ISRAELIS WERE NOT LIKELY TO WANT TO HAVE TO DEAL WITH SYRIA AS A NEGOTIATING PARTNER FOR THE WEST BANK IN PLACE OF JORDAN. ON THE OTHER HAND I COULD CERTAINLY SEE

THE VALUE OF KEEPING THE SYRIANS INFORMED ABOUT THE TALKS. IN THE PAST THE PLO HAD MANAGED TO IMPROVE ITS POSTIOIN IN THE ARAB WORLD AT THE EXPENSE OF JORDAN AND OTHERS BE EXPLOITING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ARAB STATES.IF JORDAN DID NOT WANT THAT TO HAPPEN I PRESUME A FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION ON THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN AMMAN AND DAMASCUS WOULD HELP.

9. WHILE RIFAI IS A LUCID LOGICAL AND ENGAGING CONVERSATIONALIST AND THUS DID MOST OF THE TALKING I DID HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO POINT OUT TO HIM THAT WE HAD OFTEN TOLD JOORDAN THAT THE RABAT SUMMIT DECISIONS HAD NOT REPRESENTED AN ENTIRELY REALISTIC COURSE OF ACTION AND THAT WE CONTINUED TO SEE A ROLE FOR JORDAN IN THE PEACE PROCESS.I AGREED WITH HIM ON HIS AND HIS NEPHEWS ASSESSEMENT THAT JORDANS  
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PAGE 02 AMMAN 00398 03 OF 03 221658Z

IMPORTANCE IN THE AREA AND ELSEWHERE DID INDEED DEPEND UPONITS WILLINGESS TO PARTICPATE IN THE PEACE PROCESS, CONTINUING TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM WITH MODERATION AND FLEXIBILITY. WE BOTH AGREED THAT KING HUSSEIN HAD ALWAYS RECOGNIZED THIS AND WAS LIKELY TO CONTINUE TO DO SO.

10. RIFAI SAYS HE REMAINS DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS PROVIDING BAD ADVICE TO KING ON HOW TO HANDLE THIS PROBLEM IN THE FUTURE CITING AGAIN THE PRESENT GROUPS RECOMMENDATION TO THE KING TO STAY OUT OF ANY DIALOGUE WITH THE PLO. REIFIA INSTIS KING IS CONFUSED AND NEEDS HELP. OUR JUDGEMENT IS THAT KINGS KNOWS WHAT HE IS DOING AND IS MORE LIKELY TO BE GUIDED BY ZAID RIFAI THAN THE PRESENT ADVISERS WHEN IT COMES TO DEALING WITH THE EMERGING COMPLEX OF ME PEACE ISSUES AHEAD. RIFAI HAS DEEPER SEATED RELATIOONS WITH THE KING, THE KING STILL HAS DOUBTS ABOUT SHARAF'S JUDGEMENT AND MATURITY (IN PART DOUBTS SOWN BY ZAID RIFA) AND KING FURTHER LOOKS BACK AT ZAIDS SUCCESSFUL CONDUCT OF RELATIONS (AS KING SEES IT) IN PERIOD BETWEEN 1973 AND 1976.

11. COMMENT: JORDAN IS CAUGHT UP IN SERIES OF RAPID CHANGES IN THE AREA BEGINNING WITH EGYPTIANS SYRIAN RAPPROCHEMENT AND THE SADAT-LED ARAB PEACE OFFENSIVE. WE BELIEVE KING WILL MOVE ALONG WITH THE TIDE IN REALISTIC TERMS KNOWING THAT HE CANNOT DO MUCH WITHOUT ARAB SUPPORT AND THAT HIS BEST POSTURE WILL BE TO BE SEEN AS BEING BROUGHT ALONG BY ARABS RATHER THAN PUSHED OUT AHEAD BY THEM. HE WILL WANT TO LOOK TO THE NEW US ADMINISTRATIO FOR DIRECT

TION AND SUPPORT, PARTICULARLY AS HE OPWNS HIS NEW  
DIALOGUE WITH THE PLO. HE WILL PROBABLY ATTEMPT TO  
KEEP RELATIONSHIPS WITH SYRIA MIVING AHEAD RAPIDLY  
ENOUGH TO AVOID DISAPPOINTING ASSAD BUT NOT SO

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PAGE 03 AMMAN 00398 03 OF 03 221658Z

RAPIDLY AS TO ALLOW THEM TO DETERMINE FOR HIM  
THE FUTURE COURSE OF EVENTS INTERNALLY OR IN THE  
AREA OF PEACE. ONE ISSUE OF CONSEQUENCE TO US WILL  
BE WHETHER HE (AND INDEED THE OTHER ARABS) CAN MAIN  
TAIN THE CURRENT NOTES OF FLEXIBILITY WHILE THE NEW  
ADMINISTRATION REVIEW THE ISSUES OR WHETHER JORDAN  
AND THE ARABS WILL BECOME (PREMARTURELY FOR US)  
FROZEN INTO SOME PRENEGOTIATING POSITIONS WE WOULD  
RATHER OT SEE THEM TAKE.  
END COMMENT.

12. SUGGEST DEPARTMENT REPEAT TO CAIRO AND DAMASCUS.  
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## Message Attributes

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**TAGS:** PFOR, PDEV, JO, SY, EG, XF, PLO, (RIFAI, ABDUL MUNEIM)  
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